

**ROOTS OF THE UPCOMING NUCLEAR CRISIS**  
**OR**  
**DR. STRANGELOVE LIVES:**  
**HOW THOSE WHO DO NOT LOVE THE BOMB SHOULD LEARN**  
**TO START WORRYING**

*by*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The chance that some nuclear weapon will kill masses of innocent humans somewhere, before very long, may well be higher than it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall. One phase of the Nuclear Age, the period of superpower arms race and confrontation, has indeed come to a close, for now. But another dangerous phase now looms, the era of nuclear proliferation and with it an increased likelihood of regional nuclear wars and nuclear terrorism. This prospect is enhanced not just by “rogue” states or sub-state terrorists but above all by the United States.

The influence of the U.S. is critical for two reasons. First, because the U.S. has led by example for 62 years of making nuclear first-use threats in external conflicts, and it is engaged in making such threats right now. Second, because it may soon be the first state since 1945 to carry out such threats (after having been, at the outset of the nuclear era, the first and, so far, only one ever to do so). If and when this happens—if the people of the world and particularly the people of the United States do not prevent it—the damage to the prospects of halting proliferation and

eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, even to prospects of survival of human civilization, may well be irreversible.

### **THE GREATEST SHORT-RUN DANGER**

For the last two years, the greatest short-run danger of nuclear explosions on people has been posed by U.S. threats of a near-term air attack on Iran, possibly with nuclear weapons. In August of 2005, Philip Giraldi, a former senior CIA official, reported that “the Pentagon, acting under instructions from Vice President Dick Cheney’s office” had tasked the U.S. Strategic Command with preparing contingency plans for a “large-scale air assault on Iran employing both conventional and tactical nuclear weapons.” The latter were for “suspected nuclear-weapons-program development sites” that were “hardened or are deep underground and could not be taken out by conventional weapons.”<sup>1</sup>

Since then Giraldi’s brief comment has been confirmed many times over, notably by Seymour Hersh<sup>2</sup> in *New Yorker* articles in 2006, but also by many other journalists relying on unnamed but high-level sources. Hersh also reported, along with his accounts of the detailed discussions and planning, high-level military skepticism about the feasibility and consequences of the planned air attack, and very strong opposition to the “nuclear option” by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). As a result, he reported in July 2006, the White House had reluctantly “dropped its insistence that the plan for a bombing campaign include the possible use of a nuclear device to destroy Iran’s uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz,” although, a former senior intelligence officer told him, “Bush and Cheney were dead serious about the nuclear planning” and “the civilian hierarchy feels extraordinarily betrayed by the brass.”



Given such attitudes, and given the calculations reported by Hersh and others that only earth-penetrating nuclear weapons could promise “decisive” destruction of the hardened underground sites, there seems little assurance that the planning already completed for nuclear operations against them will not be taken off the shelf in a second round of massive air operations. And a second round is as certain to occur as is a dramatic retaliation by Iran—against American ships in Persian Gulf, or (with participation of Iraqi Shia) against American troops in Iraq, or against Israel—to the first round.

In the light of reports that not only the JCS but also Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, oppose any attack, it is not certain to occur. Yet, it is not highly unlikely, either, given the frequently reported determination of the president and vice president to bring about regime change in Iran, or at least to destroy its military structure and nuclear program, while they are still in office. (The very same high-level line-up of internal skeptics did not prevent President Nixon from sending U.S. troops into Cambodia in 1970.) Both these propositions apply as well to the use of nuclear bunker-busters if there is a massive air attack which, at this moment, still seems likely before Bush and Cheney leave office, with what appears to be a replay of the Bush administration sales campaign of August-September 2002 for the attack on Iraq.<sup>3</sup>

To repeat: there may not be an attack on Iran, in the remaining 14 months of the Bush administration. And if there is an attack, threats of nuclear weapons may not be carried out. What I wish to focus on here is the fact that the threats are occurring, with little domestic opposition, and what that discloses about the past, present, and future of the nuclear era.

A critical moment came just one week after the first Hersh article appeared on April 10, 2006. On April 18, the following exchange took place in a presidential press conference,

reflecting the international commentary that Hersh's revelations about nuclear planning aroused (briefly):

REPORTER: Sir, when you talk about Iran, and you talk about how you have diplomatic efforts, you also say all options are on the table. Does that include the possibility of a nuclear strike? Is that something that your administration will plan for?

PRESIDENT BUSH: All options are on the table.

As viewers can still see on their computers—the moment was captured on YouTube—the president's answer was swift and pointedly emphatic: “*All options...*” (All except for direct negotiations with Iran, regular diplomatic relations, assurances against American attack, or expanded trade).

From that time on, the formula as used by others—always without qualification—lacked ambiguity. And the others who have used it in the last year and a half (aside from Cheney) include the three leading Democratic candidates for the presidency, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards<sup>4</sup>; and five of the nine Republican candidates taking part in a debate televised by CNN on June 5, 2007: Rudolph Giuliani, Governor Mitt Romney, Congressman Duncan Hunter, Virginia Governor James Gilmore, and Senator John McCain.

The question they were asked was “their readiness to authorize a preemptive nuclear attack on Iran if that was what it would take to prevent the Islamic Republic from having a nuclear bomb”; their repetition of the slogan about keeping options on the table was in specific response to questions about tactical nuclear weapons.

Only Ron Paul, the libertarian Republican Congressmen, had a different reaction. When asked what he saw as the most pressing moral issue facing the United States, Paul said, “I think it is the acceptance just recently that we now promote preemptive war. I do not believe that's part

of the American tradition . . . And now, tonight, we hear that we're not even willing to remove from the table a preemptive nuclear strike against a country that has done no harm to us directly and is no threat to our national security!"<sup>5</sup>

Paul's incredulity about what he had just heard from his fellow Republican presidential candidates would seem to some an expression of sanity. But it is of note that it was remarked by a candidate who stands at one percent popular support in polls. His one percent counterparts in the Democratic presidential debate ranks, Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel, would have said the same, and they would have been just as isolated among their rivals.

Finally, to nail this point down, it was reported that when the Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton was first told that her rival Barack Obama had taken the nuclear option *off* the table for attacking *Pakistan*, a "slight smile" crossed her face, before she moved in confidently for the kill. So far in the campaign she had been charging Obama with being too naïve and inexperienced to be trusted with the presidency, and, as she realized immediately, he had just proved her point.

Obama had been asked by an AP reporter whether there was any circumstance where he would be prepared or willing to use nuclear weapons in Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat terrorism and Al-Qa'ida leader Osama bin Laden. As *USA Daily* reported, "'I think it would be a profound mistake for us to use nuclear weapons in any circumstance,' Obama said, with a pause, 'involving civilians.' Then he quickly added, 'Let me scratch that. There's been no discussion of nuclear weapons. That's not on the table.' . . . When asked whether his answer also applied to the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, he said it did."<sup>6</sup> (He meant for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He had elsewhere kept it on the table for Iran, like Clinton and Edwards.)



Ron Paul, presumably, would have applauded that answer. But Hillary Clinton, who has no interest in one percent solutions in presidential campaigns, knew better. The AP account continues:

Clinton chided her fellow senator about addressing hypotheticals.

“Presidents should be very careful at all times in discussing the use *or non-use* of nuclear weapons . . . I don’t believe any president should make any blanket statements with respect to the use or non-use of nuclear weapons,” Clinton said. [emphasis added; she was ruling out, under virtually any circumstances, committing to or even discussing “non-use.”] Asked about the notion of unilateral U.S. military action in Pakistan to get al-Qaida leadership [which she elsewhere endorsed as an option, agreeing with Obama]: “How we do it should not be telegraphed or discussed for obvious reasons.”

So what is obvious to the then front-runner—along with the generally-agreed feeling that she had won this round—is that a real president, or someone qualified to be one, would not “telegraph” that he or she *would not* use tactical nuclear weapons in unilateral operations against guerrillas inside the territory of a nuclear-armed ally. Indeed, as Reuters paraphrased Hillary Clinton as saying in this exchange, “presidents *never* take the nuclear option off the table.”<sup>7</sup> [emphasis added]

That is undoubtedly what she meant to say. And it is, simply, a correct statement about American presidents in the nuclear era, all of them so far. Moreover, she may well prove to be right in her belief that observing that tradition is still regarded as a requirement for nomination to the presidency in the twenty-first century.

What no one noted in this country (though undoubtedly some did elsewhere) was that in rejecting summarily, almost ridiculing, a “blanket” commitment of nonuse of nuclear weapons in our dealings with Pakistan, Hillary Clinton *was using* our nuclear weapons in our negotiations with Pakistan’s leadership. As is the president, the vice president, and at least five Republican and three Democratic presidential candidates (along with many Congressional leaders) with respect to our negotiations with Iran. (Though “negotiation” is a questionable term for bargaining under the shadow of a nuclear threat. In a corresponding one-on-one situation, a closer legal description would be “assault,” or perhaps “torture.”)

In short, no major candidate in either party has been willing to undercut the president’s “bargaining hand” by insisting that *initiating* or *threatening* a *nuclear attack* (particularly, against a non-nuclear adversary that does not threaten overwhelming attack against us or anyone else) is *not* a *legitimate* “option” for the president of the U.S. or for any other national leader.

As the nonmajor candidates, Ron Paul, Dennis Kucinich, or Mike Gravel might ask, “How have we come to this? When did this begin?” The answer is: A long time ago.

Meanwhile—to point out a cost of this situation—it should be self-evident that a nation that is currently threatening first use of nuclear weapons for national purposes, and has traditionally defended the legitimacy of doing so, is devoid, so long as that persists, of any moral authority—or really, much hope of any effective influence of any kind—toward averting either proliferation or similar threats by others. Indeed, it cannot fail to *promote* both spread and use of nuclear weapons.

Such threats have the perverse effect of challenging other states, distinctly including Iran right now, to acquire nuclear capabilities of their own, thereby stimulating a regional nuclear

arms race—mimicking past superpower folly—to be able likewise to threaten, to deter or to preempt nuclear attack.

Yet it will take more than a change in administration or party for the U.S. government to join China and most of the non-nuclear states of the world in rejecting the legitimacy of first-use threats or attacks under any circumstances. The opposite of that proposition has been fundamental to U.S. nuclear policy, and to its military policy as a whole, every year since 1945. Preparations, plans and commitments to *initiate* nuclear war in various circumstances of crisis have long been the basis of fundamental, longstanding U.S. policies not only for Europe, but, more secretly, in Asia and the Middle East.

It is general knowledge in West Europe (though less so among the American public) that U.S. commitment to either a “tactical” first use of nuclear weapons or a strategic first strike against the Soviet Union in response to an overwhelming *non-nuclear* Soviet attack or siege of West Berlin—along with full readiness to implement these threats—have been at the heart of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) strategy since its inception. Indeed, that threat remains a basic NATO doctrine today, even though much of the former Warsaw Pact is now inside the alliance and the rest, including Russia, are applying for membership or a cooperative relationship.

What is much less widely known in the U.S.—even by scholars, “experts,” and opponents of nuclear weapons—is the frequency of consideration by our highest civilian and military officials of initiating nuclear war or threatening and preparing to do so in crises *outside* Europe.

## A HISTORY OF NUCLEAR USE



The notion common to nearly all Americans that “no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki” is mistaken. It is simply not the case—as is often asserted or implied by specialists in foreign policy or nuclear weapons strategy and arms control, and even by antinuclear activists—that U.S. nuclear weapons have piled up over the years, *unused and unusable* save for the twin functions of deterring or responding to nuclear or massive conventional attack against our allies or us by the Soviets. Again and again, generally in secret from the American public though not from adversaries, U.S. nuclear weapons *have* been used, for quite different purposes than these.

They have been used in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone’s head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled. For one type of gun-owner, getting their way in such situations without having to pull the trigger is the best possible use of the gun. It is why they have it, why they keep it loaded and ready, on hand, on hip, or “on the table.”

It turns out, as long-secret documents or transcripts have emerged over the years along with memoirs, that all American presidents since Franklin Roosevelt have shared that motive, at times, for owning nuclear weapons: the incentive to threaten “first use,” the threat to initiate nuclear attacks if an adversary does not meet certain conditions in a crisis.

In the 62 years since Hiroshima, of the ten presidents from Harry Truman to George W. Bush, nine of them have felt compelled in the midst of an ongoing non-nuclear conflict or crisis to discuss internally or to direct serious preparations for possible imminent U.S. initiation of tactical or strategic nuclear warfare. In over two dozen cases (shown in the appendix), involving all nine of these American presidents, their consideration led to their use of nuclear threats,

generally in secret from the U.S. public, in crises and limited wars in Indochina, East Asia, Berlin, Cuba, and the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

The one exception, Ronald Reagan, did not experience a crisis of comparable challenge. And all 10, including Reagan—who publicly endorsed the Carter Doctrine in 1981 and, of course, maintained U.S. nuclear obligations to NATO and elsewhere—maintained continuous commitments, along with up-to-date planning and readiness, to implement nuclear plans if major challenges arose in the NATO area, the Middle East, or other countries under our “nuclear umbrella” such as Japan and South Korea. None considered, for a moment, adopting a “no-first-use” commitment, which would have contradicted our explicit NATO commitment as well as forbidding the crisis considerations above.

Since the proposition above, that nine out of ten presidents have seriously considered or prepared to use nuclear weapons, is so unfamiliar—indeed so apparently extreme and hard to believe—I list below 25 examples (there are others) of most of the actual nuclear crises or nuclear threats that can now be documented from memoirs or other public sources, usually after years or decades of secrecy.<sup>9</sup> Without awareness of this record, I believe it is difficult for most Americans to conceive that my assertions above could be valid.

Truman’s often-questioned and unsubstantiated claims of his ultimatum over Soviet occupation of northern Iran in 1946 are omitted, though in the light of the subsequent historical record as it now stands, I do not find them implausible. Endnotes indicate the most accessible references, which usually contain other references, including primary sources. I have also included in the endnotes some lengthy quotations to present some evidence of official belief in the effectiveness of specific threats, to flesh out mention of some particularly little-known cases, and, especially, to convey the flavor of some “inside” consideration of nuclear weapons’ use.

## U.S. THREATS OR CONSIDERATION OF NUCLEAR FIRST USE IN CRISES

1. Truman's deployment of B-29s, officially described as "atomic-capable," to bases in Britain and Germany at the outset of the Berlin Blockade, June 1948.<sup>10</sup>
2. Truman's press conference warning that nuclear weapons were under consideration, the day after marines were surrounded by Chinese Communist troops at the Chosin Reservoir, Korea, November 30, 1950.<sup>11</sup>
3. Eisenhower's secret nuclear threats against China, to force and maintain a settlement in Korea, 1953.<sup>12</sup>
4. Secretary of State Dulles' secret offer to Prime Minister Bidault of three tactical nuclear weapons in 1954 to relieve the French troops besieged by the Indochinese at Dienbienphu.<sup>13</sup>
5. Internal agreement under Eisenhower and Dulles during the first Quemoy crisis, September 1954-April 1955 that nuclear weapons would be necessary as a last resort to defend the Offshore Islands, communicated to the Chinese by numerous states and moves that led, in Dulles' opinion, to the negotiated resolution of the crisis.<sup>14</sup>
6. "Diplomatic use of the Bomb" (Nixon's description) to deter Soviet unilateral action against the British and French in the Suez crisis, 1956.<sup>15</sup>
7. Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs during the "Lebanon Crisis" in 1958 to prepare to use nuclear weapons, if necessary, to prevent an Iraqi move into the oilfields of Kuwait.<sup>16</sup>



8. Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs in 1958 to plan to use nuclear weapons, imminently, against China if the Chinese Communists should attempt to invade the island of Quemoy, occupied by Chiang's troops, a few miles offshore mainland China.<sup>17</sup>
9. 1959 Berlin Crisis.<sup>18</sup>
10. 1961 Berlin crisis.<sup>19</sup>
11. The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.<sup>20</sup>
12. Much public discussion, in newspapers and in the Senate of (correct) reports that President Johnson had been advised by the JCS of the possible necessity of nuclear weapons to defend marines surrounded at Khe Sanh, Vietnam, 1968.<sup>21</sup>
13. Threats to deter Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear capability, 1969-1970.<sup>22</sup>
14. Nixon's secret threats of massive escalation, including possible use of nuclear weapons, conveyed to the North Vietnamese by Henry Kissinger, 1969-72.<sup>23</sup>
15. Threats and nuclear-capable naval deployment in 1971 to deter (according to Nixon) Soviet response to possible Chinese intervention against India in the Indo-Pakistani war, but probably also, or mainly (as the Indians read it), to intimidate India from exerting further military pressure on Pakistan.<sup>24</sup>
16. Nixon puts SAC on high alert in October 1973 to deter the Soviets from intervening unilaterally with ground forces to separate the combatants in the Arab-Israeli war, by underscoring U.S. threats to oppose them by force and expressing U.S. willingness to risk escalation to all-out nuclear war.<sup>25</sup>
17. President Ford places nuclear weapons on DEFCON 3 alert on August 19, 1976, in response to "the tree-trimming incident", a fatal skirmish in the DMZ. A U.S. show of force

threatening possible use of nuclear weapons includes flying B-52 bombers “from Guam ominously north up the Yellow Sea on a vector directly to...Pyongyang.”<sup>26</sup>

18. “The Carter Doctrine on the Middle East,” January 1980, as explained publicly by Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Assistant Secretary of State William Dyess, and other spokesmen and authorized leaks.<sup>27</sup>
19. Serious White House and JCS consideration, August 1980, of possible imminent use of tactical nuclear weapons if a secret Soviet buildup on the Iranian border led to a Soviet invasion of Iran; followed by expression of explicit, secret nuclear warnings to the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>
20. The Carter Doctrine reaffirmed in essence, including its nuclear component, by President Reagan in January 1981.
21. Formal threats by the George H.W. Bush administration of possible U.S. nuclear response—preplanned in detail—to Iraqi gas attacks or other “unconscionable actions” by Iraq in Operation Desert Storm, January 1991.<sup>29</sup>
22. Explicit, secret threats by the Clinton administration of nuclear use against North Korea in 1995 on their nuclear reactor program (following near-launch of a U.S. conventional attack in 1994).<sup>30</sup>
23. Public warning of a nuclear option by Clinton’s Secretary of Defense William Perry against Libya’s Tarhuna underground chemical weapons facility in 1996.<sup>31</sup>
24. George W. Bush/Iraq<sup>32</sup>
25. Presidential warnings by President George W. Bush and other officials in 2007 that nuclear first use against Iran is “on the table” if Iran does not meet his demand to cease enriching uranium in its energy program. Widespread leaks of detailed operational planning for short-

notice nuclear strikes against Iranian underground sites, and possibly other targets, since 2003-2004, alongside authoritative leaks and studies of planning and deployment for vast non-nuclear air attacks on all supporting elements of the Iranian regime.<sup>33</sup>

### SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

*First:* Although the current warnings and preparations for nuclear war in the Middle East are the most *public* threats since the Carter Doctrine 27 years ago, or the crises over Berlin and Cuba 19 years before that, it follows from this listing that there has been no 62-year moratorium upon the active consideration and use of nuclear weapons to support “nuclear diplomacy.”

*Second:* None of the cases prior to 2002 involved blatant aggression by the U.S., threats for the purpose of land-grab, or “preventive wars.” That cannot be said—quite the contrary—for George W. Bush’s threats in connection with his invasion of Iraq in 2003. The others, from the point of the presidents and their aides, appeared to them “defensive,” holding on to an existing sphere of influence. This hold for them however much and however realistically these threats may have looked to observers, critics and adversaries in particular cases as their holding on to parts or forms of U.S. informal empire, “defending” what was not rightfully “ours.”

Even in the Persian Gulf, there has been a feeling, not only among our officials, that we were and are defending “our” oil, or our “access” (read, control). As a poster often carried in demonstrations protesting the Iraq invasion put it, with rather profound irony: “How did our oil get under their sand?”

I am not making apologies for these distinctions or the ideology that underlies them, merely observing them. I must say that I once shared these reassuring perceptions, when I was



what I would now see as a sub-manager of empire, but I became free of these particular delusions, with help, forty years ago.

*Third:* It is noteworthy that every time troops of an ally we supported, or our own interventionary forces, were in danger of being surrounded or overrun—the French at Dienbienphu, Chiang’s troops deployed on Quemoy, Marines at the Chosin Reservoir or Khe Sanh—there was active military and presidential consideration of using nuclear weapons to defend them.<sup>34</sup>

The inescapable calculation that American troops, of whatever size, sent to break through a Soviet blockade of West Berlin would inevitably be subject to being surrounded by superior Soviet forces in East Germany lay at the root of American planning to threaten or launch nuclear weapons, if necessary, to maintain our access to and control of West Berlin. That contingency alone was sufficient to serve as the pivot for our whole strategic posture.

I suspect that antinuclear activists in general have too little appreciated the link between our ambitious imperial policy—our belief that we had the right to a sphere of influence that extended right to the borders of the Soviet Union and China (now, the whole world) as in Iran, Korea, the Persian Gulf, Taiwan, Vietnam—and our reliance on first-use nuclear threats to make that feasible, to give us a trump-card ability to protect our expeditionary forces thousands of miles from home from larger ground forces operating in their own neighborhoods.

Another linkage too often missed by my colleagues in the antinuclear movement, it has seemed to me, is that between U.S. first-use threats and our escalatory strategic forces. Since beginning to investigate the secret history of nuclear threat-use in the late 1970s I have come to see it as a crucial part of the explanation why 10 U.S. presidents have continued over three generations—even after the arrival of parity with the Soviets and even after the Soviet Union

ceased to exist—to develop and buy more and more first-use and first-strike nuclear weapon systems, and to insist on maintaining a huge arsenal of them indefinitely.

Incentives in the political economy of the U.S., and earlier in the Soviet Union—each of which, as E.P. Thompson once put it,<sup>35</sup> could well be seen as *being* rather than *having* a military-industrial complex—go a long way to explain this inertial buildup. But that does not plausibly account for the particular, largely destabilizing nature of the highly accurate, fast-response weapons systems actually developed and deployed.

The largely unknown history of the frequent presidential recourse to nuclear threats suggests a precise explanation for this. All postwar presidents—even those who may have abhorred the notion of actually launching nuclear weapons under any circumstances—have felt obliged, partly from their personal experience in office (and partly from pressure by foreign policy elites) to maintain and increase the credibility and effectiveness of nuclear threats they might make in the future.

The need to make our threat to initiate tactical or strategic nuclear attacks on the Soviets to protect our ground access to Berlin credible enough to deter the Soviets from capturing or destroying our ground probes, compelled us (sic) to build strategic forces *for escalation or preemption, not retaliation*, that could nevertheless kill half a billion humans or more, and to maintain the organizational and psychological readiness to launch them with that probable effect—all of this simply to prevent the loss of West Berlin.

As E.P. Thompson said of this logic and posture, “If all this sounds crazy, then I can only agree that crazy is exactly what it is.”<sup>36</sup> Even as a Cold Warrior (who felt a strong concern for the freedom of the people of Berlin) in the Pentagon in the early 60s, I thought that policy was

immoral and insane. But I can't claim that I did what I should have done to expose it, as a possible step toward transforming it.

*Finally:* Some of these two dozen nuclear threats were probably bluffs, some probably not. Most were ambiguous, some were surely unnecessary, a few were defied (notably, Nixon's nuclear threats in 1969 and later). But most were believed by presidents and their officials to be successful, rightly or wrongly, which is why they kept relying on them.

One of the successes, the Pentagon and White House concluded, was the Gulf War in 1991. Saddam Hussein did not, after all, use the chemical weapons he then possessed—some on alert missiles—either against Allied troops or against Israel. Fear of Israeli nuclear reprisal may have been an especially effective deterrent to his attacking Israel with gas warheads. But the U.S. also used its weapons. In delivering a warning letter from President George H.W. Bush to the Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, Secretary of State James A. Baker III says in his memoirs that, "I purposely left the impression that the use of chemical or biological agents by Iraq could invite tactical nuclear retaliation."

At the same time, William Arkin cites Bush's memoirs as reporting to the effect Bush had, to the contrary, "privately decided in December 1990 that U.S. forces would not retaliate with nuclear weapons even if the Iraqis used chemical munitions." In other words, in Bush's own mind the impression Baker intended was a bluff. Nevertheless, Arkin's interviews with Iraqi civilian and officials after the war left him with "no doubt that Saddam's government believed that the United States was prepared to use nuclear weapons had Iraq used chemical-tipped Scud missiles."<sup>37</sup> And this is true in other cases as well. Arkin reports that Vice President Cheney, on a Sunday interview program, left the impression that excessive U.S. casualties, not only Iraqi



chemical weapons, could trigger nuclear use. According to a CNN/Time poll in November, 45 percent of the American public favored such use, “if it might save the lives of U.S. troops.”

Still, most officials stuck to the slightly ambiguous script that was, evidently, pulled out of the drawer 11 years later (once more facing the possibility of Saddam’s chemical weapons, by then nonexistent) and again this year for Iran. On February 1, 1991, with reference to the nuclear debate, Vice President Quayle explained on BBC that U.S. “policy is very clear and that is we simply don’t rule options in or out.” On February 2, urged by the White House to “clarify his views,” as Arkin puts it, Quayle said on CNN more than once that “I just can’t imagine President Bush making the decision to use chemical or nuclear weapons under any circumstances,” then added, “But you never rule options—any options—out,” which was all the news media quoted (Quayle’s “refusal to rule out the use of nuclear weapons”).

“When asked if Quayle’s statement meant that the United States might use nuclear weapons...” Secretary Cheney said, “I think it means we don’t rule options in or out.” Or as President Bush himself had said in November, “I am going to preserve all options.”

In any case, as Arkin’s interviews revealed, Iraqi officials in general felt sure the nuclear option was in, indeed, likely or certain to be chosen if they used their chemical weapons. And they may well not have been wrong. Though apparently Baker and Scowcroft, then National Security Advisor, agreed with Bush that nuclear weapons should not be used, they evidently did not tell then Secretary of Defense Cheney this. Five years later he believed that the Bush administration had never made an official decision about it; he told CNN, “If Iraq used chemical or biological weapons . . . the U.S. would consider all options including nuclear weapons.”

And indeed, even Bush and Baker could not have reliably predicted their own response in the event of heavy U.S. casualties. General Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

(JCS), left open that question about himself; he reports highly secret studies by the JCS about using nuclear strikes to destroy the Republican Guard divisions, not only to retaliate against Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

As for the Iraqis, Tariq Aziz said in 1995 that Iraq did not launch its chemical weapons because the leaders feared nuclear retaliation. Some serious authorities question this, and others would stress other constraints, military and physical, on Iraqi capabilities. But what matters in this discussion is what U.S. officials believed and how they—and just as important, leaders in other regimes—reacted.

Baker says in his memoirs, “My own view is that the calculated ambiguity regarding how we might respond has to be part of the reason” that Iraq failed to use its chemical or biological agents. Arkin, along with many other journalists and scholars, notes that the Pentagon was even more confident of this conclusion, and drew from it that first-use threats, ambiguous or not, were both effective and essential in deterring WMD use in their future adversaries (with some in the Pentagon, including Paul Wolfowitz, already having Iraq in their sights again). If there was any chance of the U.S. Executive branch adopting no first use of nuclear weapons in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this “lesson” destroyed it.

But there were lessons for others as well. The U.S. “success”—even if it were accepted as true with respect to Iraq—came at a high price, even apart from its dangerous effects on U.S. decision makers. The message that the United States and its allies regarded such threats both as legitimate and as successful could not have been lost on potential proliferators, who could imagine themselves either as receiving or as imitating such threats themselves in the future.

Yet another spur to proliferation was the accompanying thought, among Third World observers, that Iraq might have been spared both these nuclear threats and the heavy

conventional bombing it received if Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon had already been successful. Both of these incentives undoubtedly made an impression on some in Iran.

The latter inference became inescapable after 2003, with the dramatic difference in the U.S. responses to a supposed nuclear weapons program in Iraq and an actual successful one in North Korea. Once again, there was talk of nuclear options against a non-nuclear Iraq if Saddam had used chemical or biological weapons against U.S. troops. And this time it seems likely that deterrence would *not* have worked reliably, with Saddam's regime and his own life at stake facing invading forces in Iraq itself (if he had still had the WMDs that Bush, Cheney, Powell, and Tenet claimed).

Iraq, in other words—still not having nuclear weapons itself—was saved from nuclear destruction in response to a chemical defense only by Saddam's prior compliance with United Nations (UN) inspectors and their own diligence and effectiveness. Meanwhile, both conventional and nuclear threats that even Clinton had aimed at North Korea in the 1990s magically disappeared under George W. Bush when North Korea tested its own nuclear device. A conventional or nuclear U.S. attack in the near future on a yet-non-nuclear Iran would underline that contrast once again for the rest of the world.

"Don't confront the U.S. without having nuclear weapons," was the lesson an Indian diplomat drew in 1991. This probably had some bearing on the Indian testing later in the decade (along with U.S. refusal to commit to no first use or moves toward abolition at the NPT Renewal Conference in 1995). From 1995, and perhaps from 1991, proliferation was on, in several threshold states.



And once proliferation has occurred, new nuclear states are likely to use the same ambiguous first-use threats, in the same ways and with the same risks of provocation, commitment, and of possible failure and escalation.

The thrust of the argument above is to reject the common, condescending belief of the “First World” that significant risk of nuclear war will emerge for the first time only with the acquisition of nuclear weapons by “irresponsible, immature” leaders in the Third World. But it also presumes that the risk of nuclear war has been higher over the last 60 years than the world public was allowed to learn.

With nuclear weapons in the hands of a greater number of leaders, individually no more but *no less* reckless than most American presidents of the last 60 years, the long-term risk of nuclear explosions launched by nuclear weapons states is higher still. There is no basis here for limiting the danger of such attacks exclusively to nonstate, “terrorist” groups. The latter real and growing danger must be seen not as replacing but as adding to (and being enhanced by) the dangers of existing and broadened possession of nuclear weapons by states, led by our own.

#### **THE NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL NORM AND PRACTICAL DISINCENTIVES**

Without an effective international norm against both acquisition and threat/use of nuclear weapons, there cannot be an adequate basis for consensual, coordinated international action to prevent such acquisition or use, including intrusive inspections “any time any place,” with comprehensive sanctions against violators of the norm. But there cannot be such a norm, a true international consensus on values and obligations, so long as the current nuclear weapon states

project an indefinite extension of a two-tier system in which they are subject to a different set of rules, or in effect, no rules at all.

Still less can there possibly be a universal norm against acquisition or use of nuclear weapons while a superpower, the United States, *is actually engaged in using them*, as at present (September 2007) in threats against Iran.

At the same time, trying to close off all technological access to nuclear weapons will never be enough to discourage others from following America's and NATO's nuclear example. The "supply side" approach, by itself, cannot succeed in stopping proliferation. Nor can the current threats of military preemption.

In the immediate case of Iran, in the absence of a ground invasion—of incalculable cost, length and consequences—a full-scale air assault could actually speed up, over a period of years, Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. It would replace any prospects of negotiating intense inspection and restraint of the Iranian nuclear energy program by an uninhibited, totally *uninspected* crash pursuit of nuclear weapons outside the NPT, in underground, dispersed sites.

Meanwhile, this very prospect of an eventual Iranian bomb would encourage nuclear weapons programs throughout the Middle East. This already seems to be occurring, with sudden interest in "nuclear energy" programs in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States. Which of these would be subject to threats of an American preemptive attack? For that matter, which of the more than 40 states that could pursue a near-term nuclear capability—with the breakdown of the NPT and moratorium on testing that would almost surely follow an American attack on Iran—would be plausibly deterred by the prospect of American military preemption? Japan? Brazil (followed by Argentina)? Taiwan? South Korea?

*Discouraging Iran now and in the future, by a variety of diplomatic means, from leaving the NPT, rejecting international inspection or acquiring nuclear weapons is thus extremely important.* But by the same token—contrary not only to Senator McCain (“the only thing worse than war with Iran is Iran with a nuclear weapon”) but to the whole Democratic and Republican establishment that has effectively lined up with him on this backwards judgment—*foregoing military assault on Iran is essential.* For all the severe limitations of the existing “nonproliferation regime,” which have brought us to this point, its breakdown would surely be even more dangerous. An American attack on Iran would be a fatal attack on the NPT and the unratified CTB. It would end any real hope of avoiding a chaotic nuclear regime.

#### **THE NEED FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS ABOLITION**

It is urgent for the nuclear-weapon states to acknowledge the reality that they have been denying, and the non-nuclear-weapon states have been proclaiming, for almost 40 years: that in the long run, and that time has arrived, effective nonproliferation is inescapably linked to nuclear disarmament.

It is all or none. Eventually, indeed, very shortly, either all nations forego the right to possess nuclear weapons indefinitely and to threaten others with them under any circumstances, or every nation will claim that right, and actual possession and use will be very widespread.

Abolition of nuclear weapons must come in stages, but if proliferation in the near future is to be averted, a true commitment to total abolition of nuclear weapons—banning and eliminating their use and possession—as the truly reigning international goal is no longer to be



delayed or equivocated. We must begin now the effort to explore and to immediately help bring about conditions that will make a world of zero nuclear weapons feasible.

We cannot accept the conclusion that abolition must be ruled out “for the foreseeable future” or put off for generations. There will not be a truly long-run human future without it. In particular, it seems more naïve than realistic to believe that large cities can coexist indefinitely with nuclear weapons. If human civilization in the form that emerged 4,000 years ago (in Mesopotamia!) is to persist globally even another century or two, a way must be found to make the required transformations ultimately practical.

Whether these transformations are *politically* possible in the world as it is in 2007 is another question. For the immediate future, the duration of the Bush administration through 2008, that question can be answered definitely: No. For most of the necessary measures, even negotiations toward them are now actively opposed, or stalemated, by the Bush administration.<sup>38</sup> The Comprehensive Test Ban remains unratified, and the Antiballistic Missile Ban Treaty was rescinded in 2002. Unilateral steps that could reduce nuclear dangers within days or weeks, like de-alerting, are not even considered. All this in addition to the nuclear first-use threats and preparations discussed above.

This places an extremely high premium on averting an attack by the Bush administration on Iran—either non-nuclear or, still worse, nuclear—or, so far as possible, the occurrence of a new 9/11 in the U.S. Either of these would launch an escalatory dynamic—including a resumption of nuclear testing by the U.S. and hence by many other countries, along with intense domestic repression of dissent in the U.S. and perhaps elsewhere—that would put nuclear disarmament permanently beyond reach.

But the replacement of this administration in 2009 by another (whether Democrat or Republican) will not, in the light of past experience, make fundamental changes in U.S. policies and posture—changes that are necessary to prevent widespread nuclear proliferation or use—easy to achieve or even likely, merely, possible. The obstacles to achieving these changes even after the departure of President Bush and Vice President Cheney are posed not so much by the majority of the American public—though many in recent years have shown dismaying manipulability—but by officials and elites in both parties and by major institutions that consciously support militarism and empire.

Such elites and structures are inordinately powerful, yet not (as the breaking of the Berlin Wall, the nonviolent dissolution of the Soviet empire and the shift to majority rule in South Africa demonstrate) all-powerful.

## **NO FIRST USE**

Only in the context of normative as well as practical disincentives to acquire or threaten nuclear weapons can there be effective international collaboration in verifying and enforcing global bans on such activities. (That collaboration is at the same time the best, the only, hope of minimizing terrorist access to nuclear materials.) Such norms have to be universal: one set of rules for everyone.

Years after the former members of the Warsaw Pact, including Russia, began asking to be admitted to NATO, and after China has acquired most-favored-nation status, the United States still refuses to adopt a policy of “no first use.” This means that the United States refuses to make a commitment to never under any circumstance initiate a nuclear attack. This is also true of

Britain, France and now Russia, which abandoned its no-first-use doctrine in late 1993, citing the United States-NATO example and reasoning in doing so.

This is not only a matter of words, as some suppose. Despite sensible moves on both sides beginning in late 1991 to remove tactical nuclear weapons from the surface Navy and from ground units—responding to realistic fears in both leaderships of “loose nukes” in the Soviet Union—both states continue to deploy sizeable numbers of tactical weapons on air bases and still larger numbers in reserve storage. Virtually all of these weapons are vulnerable to nuclear attack. Thus, they are weapons *only* for first use or for use against non-nuclear opponents.

So long as these continue to be components of the nuclear arsenals of both the United States and Russia, even after their own overarching confrontation has ended, there is simply no logical argument for denying either the legitimacy or reasonableness of nuclear arsenals sized and shaped to the same ends in other countries. This is especially true for countries such as Pakistan and Israel, who face regional opponents with much larger conventional forces. This, after all, was the historic rationale for NATO’s reliance on first-use nuclear threats.

In May 1990, a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir was plausibly feared by U.S. officials, and little has happened since to reduce the prospect of a recurrence. But neither then nor later was the United States in a position to invoke an internationally-accepted norm against Pakistan’s tacit first-use threats, since Pakistan was so clearly imitating U.S. and NATO behavior.

There is, unfortunately, no one step toward abolition and nuclear safety that will set all the others effectively in motion. But there are several current practices, each of which is sufficient to block real change overall. The U.S. proclivity to *use* its nuclear weapons by threatening them, as at present, is one of these.



Out of all the numerous policies where change is urgently, even desperately, needed, let me continue to focus on the long-term U.S. rejection of a no-first-use commitment, and the erosion in the last generation even of the “negative security assurance” proclaimed by Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, in 1978 and supposedly reiterated by officials in succeeding administrations including the current one, which promises, essentially, nonuse of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

Few Americans in or out of government are aware of the extent to which the United States and NATO first-use doctrine has always isolated the United States and its Western allies (including Israel) morally and politically from world opinion. Nor are they familiar with the sharpness of the language used by majorities in the UN General Assembly in resolutions condemning the policies on which NATO has long based its planning.

UN Resolution 36/100, the Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe, was adopted on December 9, 1981 (in the wake of the 1980 Carter Doctrine, endorsed by Reagan—openly extending first-use threats to the Persian Gulf—which this Resolution directly contradicted and implicitly condemned). It declares in its Preamble: “Any doctrine allowing the first use of nuclear weapons and any actions pushing the world toward a catastrophe are incompatible with human moral standards and the lofty ideals of the UN.”

The body of the UN Resolution 36/100 declares: “States and statesmen that resort first to nuclear weapons will be committing the gravest crime against humanity. There will never be any justification or pardon for statesmen who take the decision to be the first to use nuclear weapons.” Eighty-two nations voted in favor of this declaration. Forty-one (under heavy pressure from the U.S.) abstained; 19 opposed it, including the United States and most NATO member nations.

That the dissenters were allies of the United States is no coincidence. The first-use doctrine denounced here in such stark terms underlies the basic strategic concept of NATO, devised and promoted by the United States from the early 50s to the present. (Most Americans, polls show, have been unaware of this). NATO plans and preparations not only “allow” first use of nuclear weapons, if necessary to defeat an overwhelming attack; they promise it. They always have, and they still do.

This remains true despite the fact that the possibility of an overwhelming conventional attack against NATO no longer exists. Eighteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons remain in Europe to carry out first-use nuclear attacks as a “last resort,” although the Warsaw Pact is no more and all its former members, including Russia, have indicated desire for membership in NATO. In 1997, a serious effort to promote consideration of a no-first-use doctrine by Germany—West Germany had been the strongest European supporter of the first-use policy during the Cold War—was shelved after intense opposition by the Carter administration.

The same apparent anachronism exists in the case of the Carter Doctrine, which effectively extended the U.S. first-use commitment from NATO Europe to the Persian Gulf and more generally to the Middle East. In Carter’s words, in his January 23, 1980 State of the Union address: “An attempt by any *outside force* to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” (emphasis added)

Thus, just like the NATO strategy protecting Western Europe, Carter’s new nuclear-first-use threat policy was initially rationalized as required to confront a supposed threat to the Gulf from a power external to it: the same one that threatened the NATO area, the Soviet Union. Yet

as in the case of NATO, the first-use threat persists long after its superpower target has ceased to exist, with its place taken by no other “outside force,” not Russia or anyone else.

In effect, the Carter Doctrine has been revised to define any U.S.-suspected attempt by any force *inside* the Middle East, one not aligned with U.S. interests, to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on U.S. vital interests (read, vital fluids) requiring and justifying use of any means to oppose it, including nuclear weapons.

But the U.S. is not the only adherent to such a doctrine. After Saddam Hussein attempted to annex Kuwait by force in 1990, not one of the four nuclear states militarily arrayed against Iraq in the Gulf War (the United States, Britain, France, and Israel) refrained from tacit threats to initiate nuclear attacks under some circumstances.

Of the nine actual nuclear weapon states, only China has made the simple, unqualified commitment that it would never, under any circumstances, be the first to use a nuclear weapon against another state, and that it would not use nuclear weapons at all against a non-nuclear weapon state. The United States should join China in making this commitment, and call on Russia and other nuclear states to do likewise.<sup>39</sup>

As concrete implementation of this shift—apart from repudiating immediately declarations by anyone that “all options” including nuclear first use are legitimately on any bargaining table—the U.S. and Russia should agree to withdraw from deployment all tactical nuclear weapons, seeking a global ban, dismantling both weapons systems and nuclear warheads under bilateral safeguards.

With an era of widespread proliferation threatening, it should be unmistakably clear that accepting UN resolution 36/100 as a universal principle would be in the best interests of the



United States and the rest of the world. The United States and its allies would join, at last, in a moral judgment that is already asserted by the majority of governments of the world.

#### **A MORAL ISSUE**

What is at issue here is more than the practical benefits of joining in this consensus. There is a moral cost, as well, in reliance by the United States and others on threats and readiness to initiate such slaughter by state action. Many strategic planners and even many arms control analysts have lost track of the reality of what a nuclear bomb is, and what it does. In the light of that reality, plans and doctrines for the use of nuclear weapons, and resistance to the goal of eliminating them, raise questions about who we are—as a nation, as citizens, as a species—and what we have been doing and risking, what we have a right to do, or an obligation to do, and what we should not do.

Speaking personally, I have always shared President George W. Bush's blanket condemnation, under all circumstances, of terrorism, defined as the deliberate slaughter of noncombatants—unarmed civilians, children and infants, the old and the sick—for a political purpose. Thus, the destruction of the World Trade Center buildings with their inhabitants on September 11, 2001 was rightly recognized as a terrorist action, and condemned as mass murder, by most of the world.

In contrast, most Americans have never recognized as terrorist in precisely the same sense the firestorms caused deliberately by U.S. firebombing of Tokyo or Dresden or Hamburg or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These deliberate massacres of civilians, though not prosecuted after World War II like the Japanese slaughter at Nanking, were by any

prior or reasonable criteria war crimes, wartime terrorism, crimes against humanity. Likewise, the reckless disregard of civilian lives shown in the “collateral damage” inflicted by airpower and occupation forces in Iraq that have caused a major part of the more than 600,000 “excess” civilian deaths in recent years, or twice that many by a more recent estimate.

Just like the bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which would be considered, in terms of scale, tactical nuclear weapons today), any attack by a single tactical nuclear weapon near a densely populated area would kill tens to hundreds of thousands of noncombatants, as those did.

Virtually any threat of first use of a nuclear weapon is a terrorist threat. (Exceptions might be tactical antisubmarine weapons underwater, or weapons in space, air-bursts against military targets in a desert, or very-low-yield earth-penetrating weapons that may be contemplated for Iran. Any of these would be highly likely to lead, either immediately or by precedent, to less discriminating exchanges.) Any nation making such threats—which means the United States and its allies, including Israel, along with Russia, Pakistan, and India—is a terrorist nation.

But the same is true of threats of nuclear retaliation to nuclear attack. To threaten second use—above all with thermonuclear weapons, like the five permanent members of the Security Council—is to threaten counterterrorism on the largest of scales: retaliatory genocide. To possess a nuclear weapon is to be a terrorist nation.

## **REJECTING NUCLEAR TERRORISM**

To reject terrorism—as we should, as moral beings—is to reject the possession of nuclear weapons. The elimination of nuclear weapons, of nuclear terrorism, will have to be accomplished by multilateral collaboration. But it must be accomplished. To recover fundamental moral bearings, as well as to preserve life and civilization, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea must cease to be terrorist states.

The most urgent step toward that goal in the short-run is for the United States government—president, officials, and Congress, all pressed by a popular movement—to announce clearly, preferably backed by binding congressional legislation, that *there is no “nuclear option” on the bargaining table with Iran or any other nation: because we as a people and our government recognize that nuclear first use is not a legitimate “option” for the U.S. or for anyone else under any circumstances. It would be a murderous, criminal action.*

Perhaps the most serious cost and danger of the current and past U.S. policy of asserting, spuriously, the legitimacy and maintaining the credibility of first-use nuclear threats is its “opportunity cost” with respect to U.S. leadership on a path *away* from the possession and use of nuclear weapons. As is probably true also with respect to global warming, this challenge facing humanity as a whole cannot be resolved without the active leadership to that end of the United States of America. And as in the case of global warming, there is no lack at present of leadership on the part of America: the problem is that it is in precisely the wrong direction, toward an abyss. *So long as the U.S. government seeks to maintain the credibility of its first-use nuclear threats, it cannot even participate in, let alone lead, a truly significant disarmament process or a campaign to delegitimize nuclear weapons possession and use.* And without U.S. leadership—requiring a reversal of course by our government—no significant reduction in the danger to humanity from



nuclear weapons (as, from global warming) can occur. The stakes could not be higher, nor the urgency of change.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “Deep Background,” *The American Conservative*, August 1, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> *The New Yorker*, April 10-17, 2006 and July 10-17, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> That campaign is reaching new heights as this is written (September 2007), with a crescendo of administration claims that Iran has been killing American soldiers in Iraq, in effect charging acts of war: more reliably inflammatory of an American public than speculations about nuclear capability several years off. Ominously, neither Congress nor the media are questioning these claims of official Iranian responsibility for and direct involvement in attacks on Americans, though the administration is offering even less direct evidence of it—to be precise, none—than in the earlier campaign about WMDs in Iraq.

<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, Edwards at the Herzliya Conference in Israel in January 2007: “To ensure that Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep ALL options on the table, Let me reiterate —ALL options must remain on the table.” (Emphasis his, in his written transcript.) Reported January 23, 2007, Ron Brynaert, *The Raw Story* (Internet).

<sup>5</sup> Quotations are from *New America Media*, July 23, 2007, “Republican Candidates Rattle Nuclear Tails Against Iran.”

<[http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view\\_article.html?article\\_id=f3bb591fbc68e89a9d7be4d649baf99](http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=f3bb591fbc68e89a9d7be4d649baf99)>

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<sup>6</sup> AP, Dennis Conrad, August 2, 2007, *USA Daily*.

<sup>7</sup> Reuters, Steve Holland, August 2, 2007. “Obama, Clinton in new flap, over nuclear weapons.” Clinton was “extending their feud over whether Obama has enough experience to be elected president in November 2008.”

<sup>8</sup> In two cases, numbers 4 and 7 in the list, no threat may have been communicated to a foreign power: Dulles’ offer of nuclear weapons to Bidault to defend Dienbienphu (rejected by Bidault) and Eisenhower’s authorization to Twining to use nuclear weapons to repel a possible invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1958 (sic).

<sup>9</sup> In my essay “Call to Mutiny” (Introduction to *Protest and Survive*, ed. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith, New York, 1981) I presented a list of 11 cases, plus a reference to 19 nuclear “shows of force” listed by Barry Blechman and Stephen Kaplan, *Force Without War*, Brookings, 1978. Three presidents and 26 years later, many other cases have surfaced, thanks to FOIA and such windfalls as the Nixon tapes.

Joseph Gerson’s outstanding analysis, *Empire and the Bomb* (Ann Arbor, 2007) adds some examples not listed here: see his Table 1.1, pp. 37-38, which also illustrates that the Soviets, Chinese, Israelis, Pakistanis, and Indians have all used their bombs in the same way as the U.S., though much less often.

<sup>10</sup> Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 256-74. Richard Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Brookings, 1987) (hereafter, Betts) pp. 23-30.

On the administration’s belief in success in this instance, and its implications for them, see Herken:

...the important feature of the bombers—to British strategy—was that it worked—or at least many Americans believed it worked. By the end of July [1948] the absence of any

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Soviet military countermoves to the airlift that had effectively broken the blockade of Berlin was attributed in substantial part to the deterrent effect of the “atomic-capable” bombers within range of Russian cities. (p. 260)

Even Marshall—who throughout the year had been concerned that the United States not “provoke” the Russians into military action—now expressed optimism for the future. His change in attitude had been partly motivated, he confided to Forrestal, by his belief that “the Soviets are beginning to realize for the first time that the United States would really use the atomic bomb against them in the event of war.” (p. 274)

<sup>11</sup> Press Conference, November 30, 1950. Also Truman’s memoirs, *Years of Trial and Hope*, Vol. II (New York: Signet, 1965), pp. 450-51. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), pp. 472-85. (See note 14.) Betts, pp. 31-37.

<sup>12</sup> Eisenhower’s memoirs, *Mandate for Change*, Vol. I (New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 178-81. Richard Nixon, “A Nation Coming into Its Own,” *Time*, July 29, 1985 (hereafter, Nixon 1985). See also, Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 237-41. Betts, pp. 37-47.

*From Eisenhower’s memoirs:*

In the light of my unwillingness to accept the status quo, several other moves were considered in the event that the Chinese Communists refused to accede to an armistice in a reasonable time. These possibilities differed in detail, but in order to back up any of them, we had to face several facts.

First, it was obvious that if we were to go over to a major offensive, the war would have to be expanded outside of Korea—with strikes against the supporting Chinese airfields in Manchuria, a blockade of the Chinese coast, and similar measures . . .



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Finally, to keep the attack from becoming overly costly, it was clear that we would have to use atomic weapons . . . One possibility was to let the Communist authorities understand that, in the absence of satisfactory progress, we intended to move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities to the Korean Peninsula. We would not be limited by any worldwide gentleman's agreement. In India and in the Formosa Straits area, and at the truce negotiations at Panmunjom, we dropped the word, discreetly, of our intention. We felt quite sure it would reach Soviet and Chinese Communist ears.

*According to Sherman Adams, Eisenhower's White House chief of staff (Firsthand Report, pp. 48-49):*

Long afterward, talking one day with Eisenhower about the events that led up finally to the truce with Korea, I asked him what it was that brought the Communists into line. "Danger of an atomic war," he said without hesitation. "We told them we could not hold to a limited war any longer if the Communists welched on a treaty of truce. They didn't want a full-scale war or an atomic attack. That kept them under some control."

*Declassified minutes of the National Security Council meeting on February 11, 1953, to which the memoir passage above refers, record a noteworthy exchange, omitted from the memoirs revealing awareness on the part of the president and secretary of state that there was a significant gap between their attitude on the legitimacy and need for the "nuclear option" and the attitudes of the American public and allies, which, Dulles thought, needed to be changed (emphasis added):*

[The President] then expressed the view that *we should consider the use of tactical atomic weapons* on the Kaesong area [an area of approximately twenty-eight square

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miles, which was according to Clark, “now chock full of troops and material”], which provided a good target for this type of weapon. In any case, the President added, we could not go on the way we were indefinitely. General Bradley thought it desirable to begin talking with our allies regarding an end of the sanctuary, but thought it unwise to broach the subject yet of possible use of atomic weapons.

Secretary Dulles discussed the moral problem and the inhibitions on the use of the A-bomb, *and Soviet success to date in setting atomic weapons apart from all other weapons as being in a special category. It was his opinion that we should try to break down this false distinction.*

The President added that we should certainly start on diplomatic negotiations with our allies. To him, it seemed that our self-respect and theirs was involved, and if they objected to the use of atomic weapons we might well ask them to supply three or more divisions needed to drive the Communists back, in lieu of the use of atomic weapons. In conclusion, however, the President rules against any discussion with our allies of military plans or weapons of attack.

The corresponding discussion in Eisenhower’s memoirs does raise the subject of allied attitudes (and perhaps, implicitly, those of the American public as well) in remarks that may well express the attitudes of some later presidents (e.g., Richard Nixon, then Eisenhower’s Vice President) when they contemplated presenting a U.S. nuclear first use to allies and the American public as a *fait accompli*:

If we decided upon a major, new type of offensive, the present policies would have to be changed and the new ones agreed to by our allies. Foremost would be the proposed use of atomic weapons. In this respect American views have always differed somewhat from

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those of some of our allies. For the British, for example, the use of atomic weapons in war at that time would have been a decision of the gravest kind. *My feeling was then, and still remains, that it would be impossible for the United States to maintain the military commitments which it now sustains around the world (without turning into a garrison state) did we not possess atomic weapons and the will to use them when necessary.* But an American decision to use them at the time would have created strong disruptive feelings between ourselves and our allies. ***However, if an all-out offensive should be highly successful, I felt that the rifts so caused could, in time, be repaired.*** (p. 180, emphasis added)

<sup>13</sup> Prime Minister Bidault in the film *Hearts and Minds*, and in Roscoe Drummond and Gaston Coblentz, *Duel at the Brink* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 121-22. Also see, Richard Nixon's memoirs, *RN* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 150-55. Betts, pp. 48-54 (Betts gives equal weight, I think unduly, to Dulles' denials of Bidault's accounts.)

*As Bidault told Drummond and Coblentz (and later repeated to Peter Davis in Hearts and Minds):*

Bidault understood Dulles, on two separate occasions, to have offered him the use of American atomic bombs by French forces in the Indochina war.

By Bidault's account, both offers were made before the fall of Dienbienphu; prior, that is, to the Geneva Conference. According to Bidault, both offers were made to him personally by Dulles in Paris.



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The first is recalled by Bidault as an offer of one or more atomic bombs to be dropped on Communist Chinese territory near the Indochina border in a countermove against the Chinese supply lines to the Vietminh forces at Dienbienphu.

Bidault, by his account, declined both offers. He told Dulles that it would be impossible to predict where the use of nuclear weapons against Red China would end, that it could lead to Russian intervention and world-wide holocaust. In the case of the second offer, he considered the French and Vietminh forces to be by then too closely engaged at Dienbienphu to permit the use of atomic weapons.

<sup>14</sup> Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*, Brookings, pp. 54-62, Dulles' quote on p. 61. See also Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, "U.S. Nuclear Threats: Then and Now," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September/October 2006, Vol. 62, No. 5, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1978), pp. 238, 256.

<sup>17</sup> Morton H. Halperin, *The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis: A Documented History* (formerly Top Secret), RAND Corporation Research Memorandum RM-4900-ISA, December 1966. Betts, pp. 68-74.

<sup>18</sup> Nixon 1985. Blechman and Kaplan, pp. 343-84.

<sup>19</sup> Blechman and Kaplan, pp. 384-439.

<sup>20</sup> R. F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971). (See note 14.)

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 86-91.

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As General Westmoreland commented in his memoirs, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 338:

Because the region around Khe Sanh was virtually uninhabited, civilian casualties would be minimal. If Washington officials were so intent on “sending a message” to Hanoi, surely small tactical nuclear weapons would be a way to tell Hanoi something, just as two atomic bombs had spoken convincingly to Japanese officials during World War II and the threat of atomic bombs induced the North Koreans to accept meaningful negotiations during the Korean War. It could be that use of a few small tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam—or even the threat of them—might have quickly brought the war there to an end.

Or, as General Nathan Twining, U.S. air force chief of staff at the time of Dienbienphu and later elevated by Eisenhower to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recollected in tranquility:

I still think it would have been a good idea [to have taken] three small tactical A-bombs—it’s a fairly isolated area, Dienbienphu—no great town around there, only Communists and their supplies. You could take all day to drop a bomb, make sure you put it in the right place. No opposition. And clean those Commies out of there and the band could play the Marseillaise and the French could march out of Dienbienphu in fine shape. And those Commies would say, “Well, those guys might do this again to us. We’d better be careful.” And we might not have had this problem we’re facing in Vietnam now if we’d dropped those small A-weapons. (Dulles Oral History Project, Princeton; cited in Carl Solberg, *Riding High*, [New York: Mason & Lipscomb, 1973], p. 230).

<sup>22</sup> Nixon, 1985.

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<sup>23</sup> H.R. Haldeman's memoirs, *The Ends of Power* (New York: Times Books, 1978), pp. 81-85, 97-98; and Richard M. Nixon's memoirs, *RN*, pp. 393-414; and personal interviews with Roger Morris and Eqbal Ahmad.

*Haldeman's account:*

When Nixon spoke of his desire to be a peacemaker, he was not just delivering words his listeners wanted to hear. Nixon not only *wanted* to end the Vietnam War, he was absolutely convinced he *would* end it in his first year. I remember during the campaign, walking along a beach, he once said, "I'm the one man in this country who can do it, Bob."...

He saw a parallel in the action President Eisenhower had taken to end another war. When Eisenhower arrived in the White House, the Korean War was stalemated. Eisenhower ended the impasse in a hurry. He secretly got word to the Chinese that he would drop nuclear bombs on North Korea unless a truce was signed immediately. In a few weeks, the Chinese called for a truce and the Korean War ended. [DE note: As Eisenhower's Vice President, Nixon didn't learn this lesson from a book.]

In the 1950s, Eisenhower's military background had convinced the Communists that he was sincere in his threat. Nixon didn't have that background, but he believed his hard-line anti-Communist rhetoric of 20 years would serve to convince the North Vietnamese equally as well that he really meant to do what he said. He expected to utilize the same principle of a threat of excessive force. He would combine that threat with more generous offers of financial aid to the North Vietnamese than they had ever received before. And with this combination of a strong warning plus unprecedented generosity, he



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was certain he could force the North Vietnamese—at long last—into legitimate peace negotiations.

The threat was the key, and Nixon coined a phrase for his theory which I'm sure will bring smiles of delight to Nixon-haters everywhere. We were walking along a foggy beach after a long day of speechwriting. He said, "I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war. We'll just slip the word to them that, for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed about Communism. We can't restrain him when he's angry—and he has his hand on the nuclear button—and Ho Chi Minh himself will be in Paris in two days begging for peace."

As it turned out, it wasn't Bill Rogers, the future secretary of state, who slipped the word to the North Vietnamese, but a brilliant, impulsive, witty gentleman with an engaging German accent—Henry Kissinger (pp. 82-83).

For years, scholars, journalists and the public deprecated and essentially ignored this revelation, until (and even after) Seymour Hersh reported in a detailed chapter ("Vietnam: Planning for Gotterdammerung," pp. 118-35) of *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (1983) that Nixon and Kissinger had indeed threatened and planned massive escalation for November 3, 1969 (plans code-named Duck Hook), including possible use of nuclear weapons against North Vietnam, if Hanoi did not meet their terms for mutual withdrawal of troops from the South (which Hanoi did not agree to, and never did: one clear-cut failure of a nuclear threat). Hersh also reported that to back up his nuclear threat for the Soviets, he called a large-scale SAC alert, to be known to the Soviets but not announced to the American public. This account, too, was virtually ignored until a virtual explosion of declassified documents on the alert emerged

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detailing the Duck Hook plans for what Nixon called his “November Ultimatum” and specifically on the secret nuclear alert.

See <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/index.htm> for extensive documents and links, including a link to one of several detailed accounts by William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball, authors of “Nixon's Secret Nuclear Alert: Vietnam War Diplomacy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff Readiness Test, October 1969,” in the January 2003 issue of *Cold War History*.

My own judgment as to why this threat was not carried out, based in particular on Nixon's own memoirs (*RN*, 1978, pp. 390-414, especially 400-402 on the “Vietnam Moratorium”) is presented briefly in “Call to Mutiny” (1981):

The one clear example among past nuclear crises is the failure of Nixon's direct, secret threats to the Hanoi regime in 1969. As H.R. Haldeman has revealed [see above], Henry Kissinger conveyed the warning to the Vietnamese that Nixon would escalate the war massively, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, if they did not accept his terms, which Nixon describes in his memoirs as his “November ultimatum.” Roger Morris, who worked on these escalation plans under Kissinger, reports seeing the actual mission folders, including photographs, for the nuclear targets recommended to the president; one of them was a railhead in North Vietnam a mile and a half from the Chinese border. Hanoi never did accept the terms of Nixon's ultimatum; and Nixon's discussion and his later actions indicate strongly that it was not a bluff. Why then was the escalation not carried out?

Nixon himself gives the reason, one only, in his memoirs. There were too many Americans on the streets, demonstrating nonviolently against the war, on October 15, and again on November 15, 1969, the days of the Vietnam Moratorium actions and the

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Washington March Against Death, which happened to straddle his secret November 1 ultimatum. Nixon realized by October 16, he reports, that the protest movement had so “polarized” public opinion that he would not have sufficient support for his planned escalation. As he saw it, the antiwar movement had kept him from ending the war—his way—his first year in office. From another point of view, the protest actions—whose actual power and effect Nixon kept at the time as secret from the public as his ultimatum—has prolonged the moratorium on the combat use of nuclear weapons by a dozen years so far. [Now—September 7, 2007—38 years: so far.]

But the threats were not over. I learned for the first time in the fall of 1974 of Nixon’s 1969 Duck Hook plans and nuclear threat. I heard this from Roger Morris, who took part in that planning and who told me he had personally viewed a target folder for a proposed for an airburst tactical nuclear weapon, a railhead “a mile and a half from the Chinese border.” (He had alluded to these plans—the first person and only participant to do so—in a book review in the *Washington Monthly* that came out just after Nixon’s resignation. That led to my asking him about it.)

Soon after this I told my friend Eqbal Ahmad about it. He then informed me that when he had visited the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris in December 1973, during the Christmas bombing, he was informed by Xuan Thuy in conversation that Henry Kissinger had threatened North Vietnam with nuclear attacks on 12 occasions: “*douze menaces nucleaires.*” [note to editor: this French phrase should be in italics,, not bold. Delete this note.] As I inferred when he told me this, that implied that they had kept a list. Eqbal had the same reaction at the time; so when he saw the chief negotiator, Le Duan, the next morning, he raised it with him. He



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repeated exactly what Xuan Thuy had said to him. Le Duan shook his head negatively, Eqbal told me, and said: “*Treize*.” Thirteen. He added, “The unlucky number.”

Some former Hanoi diplomats have nodded affirmatively at this story (not the precise number), others not. Ignorance is to be expected on such a matter, as well as reticence: the Vietnamese bureaucracy is even less forthcoming with official secrets than the American, or the former Soviets. I have full confidence in Eqbal’s account of his conversations; but his informants might have been overprecise. That they were overdramatic is less likely, from what Larry Berman has unearthed about the Kissinger-Le Duan conversations, which have a menacing tone even in transcription.

Thanks to Nixon’s practice of taping his own conversations in the Oval Office, without others knowing, we have some of the famous “frank, unvarnished” advice that presidents value so highly and guard with executive privilege. Here is one such discussion (transcribed by myself and my wife Patricia: see *Secrets*, pp. 418; p. 419, not reproduced here, was also quite striking to hear). It was taped on April 25, 1972, just as Nixon and Kissinger were worrying that North Vietnamese troops outside Hue might capture that city again as they had done in 1968 (they didn’t, apparently due to devastation on them wrought by B-52 carpet bombing), and not long before Nixon mined Haiphong and loosed B-52’s for the first time on North Vietnam:

President Nixon: We’ve got to quit thinking in terms of a three-day strike (in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. **[D.E. note:** According to leaks in September 2007, of current plans for air attacks on Iran, they call for hitting 1,200 targets in three days. No doubt White House tapes of this month would sound much like this one that Patricia and I listened to in our kitchen. Without the German accent for Kissinger. We’ve got to be thinking in terms of an all-out bombing attack—which will continue until they—Now by all-out bombing

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attack, I am thinking about things that go far beyond. . . . I'm thinking of the dikes, I'm thinking of the railroad, I'm thinking, of course, the docks . . .

Kissinger: . . . I agree with you.

President Nixon: . . . we've got to use massive force . . .

Two hours later, at noon, H.R. Haldeman and Ron Ziegler (the young White House spokesman) join Kissinger and Nixon:

President: How many did we kill in Laos? [in the incursion supported by U.S. air in 1971]

Ziegler: Maybe ten thousand—fifteen?

Kissinger: In the Laotian thing, we killed about ten, fifteen . . .

President: See, the attack in the North that we have in mind . . . power plants, whatever's left—POL [petroleum], the docks . . . And, I still think we ought to take the dikes out now. Will that drown people?

Kissinger: About two hundred thousand people. [It should be mentioned that this comment—and the Kissinger-Nixon exchange that immediately follows—is heard on the tape to be uttered in a very calm, quiet, reflective tone.]

President: No, no, no . . . [quietly, hesitantly, not an expostulation] . . . I'd rather use the nuclear bomb. Have you got that, Henry?

Kissinger [quiet, slow, low]: That, I think, would just be too much.

President [surprised]: The nuclear bomb, does that bother you? . . . I just want you to think big, Henry, for Christsakes.

<sup>24</sup> Nixon, 1985. According to various Indian sources, this incident spurred on the Indian nuclear program.

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<sup>25</sup> Nixon, 1985.

<sup>26</sup> Robert S. Norris and Hans M. Kristensen, *op. cit.*, p. 70, quoting Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991) cited in (and see also) Richard A. Mobley, "Revisiting the Korean Tree-Trimming Incident," Summer 2003, pp. 110-111, 113-114. I am indebted to Norris and Kristensen for their references to this incident, the first one known to me (in 2006) involving the brief Ford administration, which I had earlier listed as a possible exception to the pattern of presidential use of nuclear weapons in crisis.

However, it might be more accurate to regard it as a "show of force" like the nineteen listed by Blechman and Kaplan, Table 2-8, p. 48, "Incidents in Which Strategic Nuclear Forces Were Involved," rather than as a nuclear threat.

<sup>27</sup> Just after the president's speech on January 23, 1980, Richard Burt of the *New York Times* (later a high Reagan official) was shown a secret Pentagon study, "the most extensive military study of the region ever done by the government," which lay behind the president's warning. It concluded, as he summarized it, "that the American forces could not stop a Soviet thrust into northern Iran and that the United States should therefore consider using 'tactical' nuclear weapons in any conflict there." Joshua M. Epstein, *Strategy and Force Planning: The Case of the Persian Gulf*, Brookings, DC, 1987, p. 16, and Richard Burt, "Study Says a Soviet Move in Iran Might Require U.S. Atom Arms," *New York Times*, February 2, 1980.

The 1979 study in question was known in the Pentagon as the Wolfowitz Report. (Yes, *that* Wolfowitz, Paul D.: at the time a deputy assistant secretary of defense for regional programs under Carter; more recently, as deputy secretary of defense in 2001-2005 under Bush, promoter and mastermind of the invasion of Iraq.) "Reportedly, the Wolfowitz study contemplated



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‘delivering tactical nuclear warheads by cruise missiles fired from ships in the Indian Ocean.’” Epstein, citing Kenneth Waltz, “Strategy for the Rapid Deployment Force,” *International Security*, Vol. 5 (Spring 1981), p. 64, n. 20.

<sup>28</sup> The August 1980 White House discussion is reported by Richard Halloran in the *New York Times*, September 2, 1986, based on interviews and an account of the Secretary of Defense and JCS involvement by Benjamin F. Schemmer: “Was the U.S. Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?” *Armed Forces Journal International*, September 1986.

This highly significant and authoritative account, including named sources, has been almost entirely ignored in the literature, except for Halloran’s story, likewise ignored. An explanation for the otherwise-mysterious buildup of Russian forces on the Iranian border, to which the Carter administration was secretly responding, may lie in Jack Anderson’s stories in the summer and fall of 1980, summarized in his memoir, *Peace, War and Politics* (New York, 1999), pp. 332-34.

Anderson asserted, against White House denials, that the Russians were aware of plans under President Carter’s direction for a “hostage raid” into Iran of vastly greater proportions—amounting to an invasion—compared to the one which was aborted in the spring. Schemmer quotes White House officials as describing this virtually-unknown 1980, crisis as “the most serious nuclear crisis since the Cuban Missile Crisis.” Administration officials regarded the explicit threats to the Soviets as successful; their account does not cover the purportedly planned hostage incursion, which was not carried out, possibly as a result of Anderson’s leaks.

See also, AP, *Rocky Mountain News*, August 27, 1986, citing NBC News, August 26: “NBC quoted intelligence sources as saying that the Soviet Union was thought to be on the verge of attacking the oil-rich Persian Gulf in August 1980, while Iran was holding American hostages. NBC quoted General David Jones, who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs at the time, as saying “there was

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no way the United States had the conventional capability to stop the Soviets if they had wanted to make a major move into Iran. . . . The case was then, as it to a large extent now, that if the Soviets decided to move in a major offensive into that region [as the White House feared at that moment, eight months after the Carter Doctrine had been announced] then you would probably have to consider the use of nuclear weapons to stop them, Jody Powell, Carter's press secretary at the time, told NBC."

Note that these accounts came out, to little notice, in 1986, six years after a reported nuclear crisis that took place during the 1980 presidential campaign. It had been kept totally secret and unreported at the time and—as is typical of presidential memoirs except for Eisenhower's—is not mentioned in President Carter's subsequent memoirs.

<sup>29</sup> Norris and Kristensen, *op. cit.*, p. 71, and William M. Arkin, "Calculated Ambiguity: Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf War," *Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. Both of these provide many more references.

<sup>30</sup> Norris and Kristensen, *op. cit.*, p. 70, citing congressional testimony in 1997 before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 13, 1997 by Gen. Eugene Habiger, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command (Stratcom).

"Asked what 'sort of deterrence' he thought U.S. nuclear weapons played in preventing WMD from being used by rogue states, Habiger responded, 'In my view, sir, it plays a very large role . . . [The threat of U.S. nuclear use] was passed to the North Koreans back in 1995, when the North Koreans were not coming off their reactor approach they were taking.'" Habiger subsequently explained [in conversation with Kristensen, August 12, 2004] that the message passed on to North Korea had been explicit" (Norris and Kristensen, p. 70).

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<sup>31</sup> Norris and Kristensen, *op. cit.* Citing Robert Burns, *AP*, “U.S. Libya,” April 23, 1996 and “Nuclear Weapons Only Option for USA to Hit Buried Targets,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, May 1, 1996, p. 3. As the latter headline indicates, this episode under Clinton aired the “need” for bunker-buster nuclear weapons against hardened underground sites that might harbor WMDs (or rogue statesmen like Saddam Hussein) that had been publicized in the Gulf War, arose again in the Iraq War, and has since 2004 led to plans for possible nuclear strikes against underground nuclear energy installations in Iran: the “nuclear option” that the president and most Democratic and Republican presidential candidates, including Hillary Clinton, insist must be “on the table” in “negotiating” with Iran (or, for Clinton, with Pakistan!)

<sup>32</sup> References in text.

<sup>33</sup> References in text.

<sup>34</sup> Very reluctantly on LBJ’s part with respect to Khe Sanh. But he did not withdraw from the base—though we had no business being there, or in South Vietnam—when General Wheeler told him that he could not assure their defense without nuclear weapons, if they were attacked in force during bad weather when close air support was hindered. Nor did he signal that he would not, even in that case, authorize nuclear defense. It is hard to believe, in fact, that he would have let the Marines be captured or killed without ordering tactical nuclear weapons on the North Vietnamese attackers.

<sup>35</sup> “Notes on Exterminism, the Last Stage of Civilization,” in *Exterminism and Cold War*, ed. New Left Review (London, 1982), p. 22: “Viewed in this way, the USA and the USSR do not *have* military-industrial complexes; they *are* such complexes.”

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in “Call to Mutiny” (1981), followed by my comment, “Yet there is a short-run, narrow-focus rationality, certain coherent, if reckless logic to the traps the Pentagon planners are



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so carefully setting for themselves, and all of us on earth. If they did not develop and deploy these new first-strike weapons (of which SDI is a current example) they could no longer even pretend that threats to initiate, or escalate nuclear war *against the Soviets* were anything but hollow.”

The logic of Vice President Cheney and the neo-cons about what we can and must do to control the Middle East is exactly as coherent, and as crazy. I learned 50 years ago the possibility of that craziness in our otherwise-shrewd leadership. And not alone in ours: which makes the world, in the nuclear era, much more than twice as dangerous.

<sup>37</sup> William M. Arkin, “Calculated Ambiguity: Nuclear Weapons and the Gulf War,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 1996 Autumn, Vol. 19, No. 4: an unusually thoughtful, detailed, and illuminating analysis. All quotes in this section are from Arkin.

<sup>38</sup> See the detailed critique of the current status of negotiations in *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security: A Civil Society Assessment of the Final Report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission*, by John Burroughs, Michael Spies, Jacqueline Cabasso, Andrew Lichterman, and Jennifer Nordstrom, copies available from Lawyers’ Committee on Nuclear Policy, Michael@lcnp.org.

<sup>39</sup> Israel, and Pakistan—and thereby, perhaps, India—would likely be the last hold-outs: but their position would then be isolated and delegitimated rather than, as now, endorsed by major powers.